

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6042

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 04, 2008

Title: An act relating to requiring a recess period for elementary school students.

Brief Description: Requiring a recess period for elementary school students.

Sponsors: Senators Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Keiser, Murray, Clements, Fairley, Spanel, Kastama and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/14/08, 2/4/08 [DPS]; 1/14/08.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6042 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Hobbs, Holmquist, Kauffman, McDermott, Rasmussen, Weinstein and Zarelli.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Current law establishes the total number of instructional hours that school districts must provide students. The instructional hours must cover the essential academic learning requirements and other subjects and activities that a school district deems appropriate. Instructional hours may include recess. However, school districts are not specifically required to provide a daily recess period.

Additionally, current law requires that every public school student in first through eighth grades receive instruction in physical education. High school students must earn at least two physical education credits, unless excused.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): By December 1, 2008, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, with statewide parent-teacher organization, must conduct and report the results of a survey of elementary schools regarding the availability and perceptions of recess. Some specific questions are provided.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION (Recommended Substitute): The requirement that each school district must provide a daily recess period for elementary school students is removed. By December 1, 2008, the Office of

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the Superintendent of Public Instruction, with statewide parent-teacher organization, must conduct and report the results of a survey of elementary schools regarding the availability and perceptions of recess. Some specific questions are provided.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: Recess is unstructured play when children make friends, learn socialization skills, and release their extra energy. Participation can help kids curb obesity. But some of our students are not receiving recess. We do not have a uniformed state policy regarding recess so it is left up to each school. This bill is not just to address one school district, parents from many school districts have indicated that their schools had either reduced or eliminated recess. Studies support regular periods of school recess to improve academic performance and consider recess essential. School recess and physical education classes are very different. Recess provides time for children to be able to approach the next subject with a clear mind. We are forcing our children to gobble their lunch to get to recess time. On rainy days the children have to spend recess in the computer lab and there are not enough computers for each child to have access to play the games on the computer.

CON: We are concerned with the continued erosion of local control through federal and state requirements that are imposed and encroach upon the flexibility for schools. Wonder whether this rises to the level of something that should be specified in state law or should we look at this issue and determine how it can best be addressed at the local level.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Rosa Franklin, prime sponsor; Kim Howard, Washington State Parent-Teacher Association; Ian King, parent; Lanita Edvalds, parent.

CON: Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators.